

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of inhibiting the generation of ceramide from sphingomyelin comprising the step of  
5 administering a pharmacologically effective dose of basic fibroblast growth factor to an animal in need of such treatment.

*sub C'*  
*sub 31*  
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said animal is a human.

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3. The method of claim 1, wherein said basic fibroblast growth factor is administered in a daily amount of from about 0.1 mg/kg to about 100 mg/kg.

*sub A1*  
15 4. A method of treating a pathophysiological state characterized by endothelial apoptosis, comprising the administration of a pharmacologically effective dose of a basic fibroblast growth factor to said animal.

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5. The method of claim 4, wherein said pathophysiological state is selected from the group selected from sepsis, radiation damage, autoimmune disease and acute respiratory distress.

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*sub 31*  
6. The method of claim 4, wherein said animal is a human.

*Sub 21* 7. The method of claim 4, wherein said basic fibroblast growth factor is administered in a daily amount of from about 0.1 mg/kg to about 100 mg/kg.

5 8. A method of treating sepsis in an individual, comprising the administration of a pharmacologically effective dose of a basic fibroblast growth factor to said individual.

*a*  
10 9. The method of claim 8, wherein said basic fibroblast growth factor is administered in a daily amount of from about 0.1 mg/kg to about 100 mg/kg.

*Sub 22*  
15 10. A method of treating an individual at risk for sepsis, comprising the step of administering to said individual a pharmacologically effective dose of a basic fibroblast growth factor.